



IditaNature

Connecting children with nature and the Iditarod Trail Sled Dog Race in Alaska

Invite a group of children - your family, a local family nature club, a group of students - to follow the Iditarod Trail Sled Dog Race and participate in *IditaNature*

What is the Iditarod? It is a dogsled race of about 1000 miles of the roughest, most beautiful terrain on the planet. Mother Nature throws jagged mountain ranges, frozen river, dense forest, desolate tundra and miles of windswept coast at the mushers and their dog teams. Add to that temperatures far below zero, winds that can cause a complete loss of visibility, the hazards of overflow, long hours of darkness and treacherous climbs and side hills, and you have the Iditarod Trail Dog Sled Race. From Anchorage, in south central Alaska, to Nome on the western Bering Sea coast, each team of 12 to 16 dogs and their musher covers around 1000 miles in 10 to 17 days beginning the 1st Saturday in March each year. It is a race extraordinaire - the "Last Great Race on Earth!" To learn all about the Iditarod online, visit www.iditarod.com There is even a special section for Teachers on this website at <http://iditarod.com/teachers>



What is *IditaNature* and how do kids participate? *IditaNature* is a fun way to encourage outdoor play while learning about the amazing Iditarod Trail Sled Dog Race. From the first Saturday in **March 2ⁿ until the last musher finishes the race**, children are each challenged to play outside for 1,150 minutes, while the Iditarod Trail Sled Dog Race is underway. Those kids who spend at least 1,150 minutes in nature (ie. the same number of minutes - or more - as the miles travelled by Iditarod mushers during the race) will win a fantastic prize, as determined by individual ***IditaNature*** organizers (parents, teachers, daycare providers, etc.). This means about 1 to 1.5 hours each day. Everything counts . . . outdoor lessons with a classroom or PE teacher, walk on the beach, play at the park, dig snow in the yard, stack firewood, explore nearby woods, go sledding, look for rocks, watch birds, play catch with a ball, go fishing, walk to the store or library . . . it can be any outdoor learning adventure or play. Kids will log their minutes spent outdoors in a nature journal, special booklet, or calendar page (a sample is included here). At the end of the 2

weeks, challenge organizer(s) approve and sign the children's logbooks or calendar and distribute prizes. Prizes could be a visit to a special outdoor place, a dog mushing experience, a spring picnic, **IditaNature** T-shirts created to commemorate each child's accomplishment, outdoor gear, a weenie roast (with s'mores, of course)...the possibilities are endless. **ANYONE CAN PARTICIPATE!**

How did IditaNature start? This exciting new initiative for connecting children with nature was launched in Homer, Alaska by Carmen Field with the Kachemak Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve and *Kids in Nature* during the 2010 Iditarod Sled Dog Race. In the past years, over 400 Alaskan kids (preschoolers and elementary students) from schools in Homer and Anchorage, Alaska met the challenge of spending at least the same amount of minutes outdoors as the mileage of the Iditarod Great Sled Race (1,150 minutes/miles). In fact, many of the kids rose to an even greater challenge...spending twice that time outside! These outdoor play ambassadors were rewarded with not just lots of fun and fresh air, but prizes offered by their teachers and community supporters that included dogsled rides with local mushers, fishing rods, a pool party, and a picnic on a local museum's trail system. And teachers from around the U.S. are starting to incorporate **IditaNature** into their P.E. and classroom activities!

To keep track of how many minutes or hours your child spends outside, you can use a chart such as this one for students (easily modified for families):

(EXAMPL CALENDAR - Create your own calendar to coincide with the race.)

Saturday Sunday Monday Tuesday Wednesday Thursday Friday

March	March	March	March	March	March	March
March	March	March	March	March	March	March
March	March	March Bring signed form to school				

Student's name _____

Total minutes _____

Parent's signature _____

Get outside and enjoy nature, fresh air, and exercise with your children today and every day. Let's go, mush!

IditaNature



THE CHALLENGE

Kids, families, and students are challenged to spend 1,150 minutes outdoors, between the first Saturday in March until the end of the race, while the Iditarod Sled Dog Race is underway...so about 72 minutes a day or ~19 hours over 2+ weeks.

How can teachers implement this initiative?

Through a school's or school district's PE program

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

With administrative support, by increasing recess time or outdoor class time March 2 –

17

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

By building outdoor time into curriculum / lesson plans

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

With the help of parents (to add time outdoors beyond the day at school)

Prize / Reward Ideas

Outdoor gear (fishing rods, bug jars, gardening equipment, toys for outdoors)

Outdoor experiences (field trip to local wild zone, picnic, dogsled rides or kennel visit, skiing, ice skating, hiking, fishing trip)

Clothing (funny hats, sunglasses, *IditaNature* T-shirts, rubber boots)

Other (classroom party, pool party...anything kids would find fun!)